

# Pentagon Renovations Continue

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**W**ASHINGTON (AFPN)—Sept. 10, 2003. Reflective arrows sit at crawl-level, about a foot up from the floor, hugging the lightly colored walls. Sparkling floors lead to escalators, elevators, and well-lit hallways. Renovations, completed nearly a year ago, still give the Pentagon's Wedge 1 a fresh look. Yet, for all its newness, this area will carry the scars of Sept. 11, 2001, forever.

Maj. John Beaulieu, from the Air Force history office, said he often thinks about that morning, especially when he is near the Pentagon's chapel that honors the victims.

"You can't help but think about it," he said. "There are photos of people who worked here and of children from the plane. It's a sober [reminder] of what happened."

Beaulieu and some co-workers were watching the horrific events unfold in New York City on a small television in their office when they felt the building shake and heard the alarms sound.

"It was like being on the side of a road when a tractor-trailer goes by," he said. "We didn't know what had happened. At first, we thought it was a bomb. We just didn't make a connection [to what had happened in New York]."

The major said it was not until later, when he ventured outside and the acrid smoke filled his lungs, that he realized how tragic the story was.

"There was black soot everywhere, and you could smell the burned wreckage," he said.

Beaulieu's office sits across the courtyard from the impact area and was in line



After the Sept. 11 attack on the Pentagon, modifications were made to the existing renovation project. The addition of half corridors between rings of the Pentagon will provide more escape routes in case of an emergency. The glass causeways can withstand hurricane-force winds.

with the path the plane took. He said that he is "very thankful" the Boeing 757 stopped when it did. He credits the stronger construction of the newly renovated Wedge 1 with saving his life.

A \$2.1 billion renovation of the 60-year-old Pentagon began in 1993, and Wedge 1 was nearly completed when American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the building that fateful morning.

The Pentagon, dedicated in 1943, is laid out in five concentric pentagonal “rings,” the “E” being the outermost and “A” the innermost. The plane hit the renovated wedge as well as an adjoining section before stopping at “B” ring.

Renovations that included structural improvements such as blast-resistant windows and steel framing saved many lives, according to Brett Eaton, communications team leader for the Pentagon’s renovation program.

The renovated area had a new sprinkler system that Eaton also credits with saving lives. The fire in Wedge 1 burned out in a matter of hours, while Wedge 2, which had no sprinklers, burned for more than two days.

Work began on Wedge 1 in 1998, and the final touchups were being done, he said.

“We were five days away from completion,” he said. “After 9-11, we basically had to start all over again.”

What just days before had been a routine renovation became known as the Phoenix Project. Construction crews worked tirelessly to rebuild Wedge 1 by Sept. 11, 2002. In February, the last group of employees returned to work in this area. In July, part of Wedge 2 was finished, and employees have returned to offices there as well.

“Before 9-11, I think [workers] were proud to be part of the Pentagon Renovation,” said Eaton. “After 9-11, it took on a whole new meaning—to make America’s military headquarters safe.”

After Sept. 11, Eaton said, there was a need to modify ongoing construction. Additions include reflective arrows on walls and doors that can help people reach exits.

“There was oily, thick smoke, and people couldn’t see [in the aftermath of the attack],” said Eaton. “The brightly-colored exit signs (above the doors) might as well have been a mile away.”

Boxes containing emergency escape masks are now available in the renovated hallways.

Another addition is the creation of “half corridors.” The glass causeways connect Pentagon rings, and can withstand hurricane-force winds. Renovated areas also contain backup water pipes to help ensure sprinkler systems will operate in the event of an emergency.

Today work continues, although the pace is not quite as fervent as during the Phoenix Project.

Construction workers are rebuilding the second phase of Wedge 2. As this nears completion, work will begin sequentially on Wedges 3, 4 and 5. Each area will be demolished, taken down to bare

bones, said Eaton. Work includes removal of hazardous materials, replacement of building systems, addition of elevators and escalators, and installation of new security and telecommunications systems.

In an effort to get life-saving measures in place as soon as possible, the remaining renovation has an aggressive schedule, with a completion projected in 2010. The installation of “smart walls” about every 20 feet for phone and data lines will save some time, Eaton said.

“We have the same goal—to be on cost, on schedule,” said Eaton. “It’s not quite the same urgency [as with Phoenix] but it’s an aggressive schedule. We’ll do what we need to and overcome challenges as we meet them.”

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